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ABSTRACT

Learning a second dialect entails learning new schemas. Most Australian Aboriginal children live in a bicultural, bidialectal context and are exposed to the discourse of Australian English, so they internalize some of its schemas but may not be able to use its schemas effectively or distinguish them from Aboriginal English schemas. Analysis of the discourse of bidialectal Aboriginal children in Southwest Australia suggests that the discourse exhibits the use of schemas from Aboriginal English and Australian English as well as parodic uses of Australian English schemas and schematic blends, which may be dysfunctional. The paper investigates, from the perspective of schema theory, the acquisition of standard Australian English as a second dialect by Aboriginal children speaking Aboriginal English as their first dialect. It begins by reviewing research on dialect acquisition and schema theory, then describes Aboriginal English and standard Australian English and highlights the repertoire of schemas in child speakers of Aboriginal English. It exemplifies discourse that illustrates each schema type, focusing on implications for understanding second dialect acquisition and implementing bidialectal education. The paper looks at how Aboriginal children cope with the acquisition of schemas underlying the content of Western education. (Contains 47 references.) (SM)

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Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue: Indigenous students' learning and schematic knowledge

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Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue: Indigenous students' learning and schematic knowledge

Abstract

Learning a second dialect entails learning new schemas, and in some cases learning a whole new set of language schemas as well as cultural schemas. Most Australian Aboriginal children live in a bicultural and bidialectal context. They are exposed, to a greater or lesser extent, to the discourse of Australian English and internalize some of its schemas. This may occur in diverse contexts, not only the context of the school. However, western-based schooling by its nature generally expects students to operate exclusively according to the schemas which underlie the standard dialect. An analysis of the discourse of bidialectal Aboriginal children in the South-West of Australia suggests that it exhibits the use of schemas from Aboriginal English ("something old"), Australian English ("something new") as well as parodic uses of Australian English schemas ("something borrowed") and schematic blends which may sometimes be dysfunctional ("something blue"). In this paper, discourse illustrating each of these schema types will be exemplified and discussed in terms of its implications for our understanding of second dialect acquisition and implementation of bidialectal education.

Key words: schema theory, Cultural schema, Aboriginal English, Indigenous Education.

This paper investigates the acquisition of Standard Australian English as a second dialect by Aboriginal children speaking Aboriginal English as their first dialect, from the perspective of schema theory. The following section develops a background for this study by briefly reviewing research on dialect acquisition, and second dialect acquisition in particular, as well as schema theory. This will be followed by a description of Aboriginal English (AE) as well as Standard Australian English (SAusE or SAE). Next, we will present a description of the repertoire of schemas in child speakers of Aboriginal English. This will serve as a basis for our discussion of how Aboriginal children come to cope with the acquisition of schemas underlying the content of Western educational system. The implications of this analysis for the educational system will finally be presented.

Second dialect acquisition

Despite the availability of an extensive literature on second *language* acquisition research (e.g., Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1990; Ellis, 1994) not much has been done regarding the issues involved in second *dialect* acquisition (Escure, 1997). As Chambers (1992) puts it, "neither dialectologists nor linguists have expended much energy on discovering the actual mechanisms of dialect acquisition" (p. 673). Escure attributes this lack of interest in research on second dialect acquisition to the difficulty involved in making a linguistic distinction between first dialect and second dialect situations.

This is notwithstanding the fact that second dialect acquisition is more prevalent than second language acquisition. Not all individuals find the chance or even find it necessary to learn a second language, whereas "there is no single human being whose repertoire is limited to only one language variety, style, or dialect" (Escure, 1997, p. 3).

It is to be noted that the findings of research on second language acquisition may not be generalizable to the context of second dialect acquisition. This is due to the fact that there

are variables operating on each of these two learning processes that may not operate on both of them. For instance, there is an implicit assumption involved in learning a standard variety concerning the status of the learner's variety. That is, the fact that the learner is acquiring a "standard" dialect may imply that his/her first dialect is non-standard, and perhaps not "correct". Acquisition of a second variety as a "standard" code is very much affected and constrained by social and social psychological factors such as distance, attitude, and bias (Escure, 1997). These factors may sometimes lead to a preference not to sound like the people who speak the standard but at the same time to sound less like the people speaking the native variety.

Among the factors which complicate the process of second dialect acquisition is the effect of the assumptions commonly made within educational systems regarding this process. One of these assumptions is the popular belief, or perhaps "myth", that standard dialect acquisition is easier and less traumatic than second language acquisition. Other relevant assumptions implicit in educational theory are that "the acquisition of dialects involves less distance between the native and the target varieties (D1 and D2) than is the case between L1 and L2" (Escure, 1997, p. 7) and also that students know the standard dialect before they go to school. A systematic study of the variables involved in second dialect acquisition may throw some doubt on the universal validity of these assumptions, which, among other things, have downsized the support for bidialectal programs.

Siegel (1999) elaborates on the inappropriateness of the majority of methods of foreign language teaching for students speaking stigmatised varieties. Methods which emphasize formal accuracy usually downgrade the value of students' first dialect, since the criterion for the accurate forms is the "standard" dialect and thus the features of the learners' first dialect would be considered "wrong". The communicative method would not be effective in teaching a second dialect because learners of a standard variety can easily achieve

their communicative goals using their own language variety (Siegel, 1999, p. 719). As Siegel observes, this has led to a fallback on the contrastive approaches to language teaching.

Second dialect acquisition should also be differentiated from first language acquisition in that "learners of a second dialect or language already possess a native linguistic system which interacts with the target system..." (Escure, 1997, p. 6; c.f. Gardner 1977, p.190).

One of the serious attempts to study the processes of second dialect acquisition is that of Chambers (1992). Based on a developmental study that he carried out with six Canadian youngsters in two families that had moved to southern England, he developed eight general principles that he believes operate on second dialect acquisition. The informants in his study spoke Canadian English as their native dialect and were acquiring Southern England English as their second dialect. Chambers's data collection involved interview, accent evaluation, identification of objects on picture cards, and reading word lists. The principles of dialect acquisition that he has proposed are as follows:

a) Lexical replacements are acquired faster than pronunciation and phonological variants.

b) Lexical replacements occur rapidly in the first stage of dialect acquisition and then slow down.

c) Simple phonological rules progress faster than complex ones.

d) Acquisition of complex rules and new phonemes splits the population into early acquirers and later acquirers.

e) Phonological innovations are actuated as pronunciation variants.

f) Eliminating old rules occurs more rapidly than acquiring new ones.

g) Orthographically distinct variants are acquired faster than orthographically obscure ones.

As Chambers (1992) admits, these principles are of a limited degree of generalizability, due to the small number of informants, who belong to a certain age group, and also to the fact that the context of the study is not representative of all second dialect acquisition contexts. However, their further empirical investigation will make a good starting point for research on issues involved in second dialect acquisition. These eight principles "are postulated as a set of empirically testable hypotheses about the determinants of dialect acquisition" (Chambers, 1992, p. 677).

Escure (1997) employed a combination of a sociolinguistic methodology and functional grammar to study the syntactic-pragmatic issues involved in the acquisition of standard dialect by native speakers of nonstandard varieties. In particular, she examined patterns of topic presentation and topic organization in spontaneous conversation. Escure based her study on the data collected from speakers of Belizean English-based varieties learning English as a standard dialect and speakers of different varieties of Chinese learning Standard Mandarin. The results of her study showed that topic marking functioned in a universal manner consistent with such psychosocial motivations in communication as economy, efficiency, clarity, expressivity or routinization (p. 285). The strategies she identified for highlighting topics are: a) presentative structures (e.g., cleft/pseudo-cleft structures, and particles), b) topic repetition and c) topic fronting (e.g., topicalization or dislocation).

As part of a study of the relationship between age and the acquisition of different linguistic features, Kerswill (1996) reviews several studies and proposes a hierarchy of difficulty for the acquisition of second dialect features. In his hierarchy, the most difficult features to learn are lexically unpredictable rules, followed by new phonological opposition. The easiest feature in this hierarchy is borrowing of new lexical items, familiar lexical items

with new pronunciations, or new exponents of familiar morphological categories (e.g., gender or number). Morphologically conditioned phonological features are in between.

Kerswill (1996) found that only the youngest children acquire the "hardest" features. He also believes that this hierarchy can predict the nature of linguistic change under different sociolinguistic conditions. This hierarchy of difficulty is subject to those criticisms directed at similar hierarchies proposed for second language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). "Difficulty" is in fact a cognitive concept that may not be reflected in the order of appearance or word length or similar considerations of surface linguistic forms.

In the context of African American children's dialect learning, research has shown that these children acquire the most basic and universal features of languages before they begin to acquire those that are unique to African American English (AAE) (Cole, 1980). It has also been shown that many linguistic features of AAE in speakers under the age of 3 are similar to those of Standard American English (SAE) (Kovac, 1980). It has been suggested that AAE child speakers acquire language in the same manner as SAE child speakers in the early stages of linguistic development and in fact it has been difficult for many to make a distinction between dialect acquisition and universal language acquisition in children before the age of 3 (see Wyatt, 1995). It is also hypothesized that the time between the age of 3 to 5 represents a period of when dialect starts to influence the production of children (Kovac, 1980). In the area of phonology, it has been shown that African American children generally commit the same types of articulation "errors" as White children of the same age (Saymoure & Saymoure, 1981). It has also been found that African American children express the same range of meanings in AAE as White children in SAE (e.g., Bridgeforth, 1987).

It is evident from the preceding review of research that the main focus in studies of dialect acquisition has been on the acquisition of formal features of language. Second dialect acquisition, however, does not always involve merely mastering a number of formal

linguistic features. Depending on the degree of homogeneity of a number of factors across two dialects, learning of one as a new dialect may place varying degrees of cognitive demand on the learner.

Learning a second dialect may or may not involve learning a second cultural system. This difference would mean a remarkable difference in terms of cognitive load. Culture and language are both cognitive systems which closely interact with each other towards the creation of meaning during the process of communication. Massive cultural differences between the speakers of the two dialects, in second dialect acquisition, thus may require the development of a totally new cultural system on the part of the learner for the interpretation and construction of meaning in the second dialect.

An appropriate approach to the study of second dialect acquisition should thus tap the cultural-linguistic factors which have a bearing on this acquisition process. Since dialect acquisition is a cognitive process, the appropriate methodology to be adopted should also be cognitively-oriented to be able to move beyond the level of description to explain the phenomenon in question.

It is the contention of this paper that schema theory best qualifies as an appropriate methodology in studies of second dialect acquisition as it provides an intersection for cognitive, cultural, and linguistic domains. Schemas are cognitive entities which may be abstracted from cultural experiences and which underlie the production of and, therefore account for, various discourse patterns.

Schemas may be studied by drawing on various types of data and data analysis procedures such as discourse analysis and introspective protocols elicited from speakers, as well as ethnographies collected during fieldwork. As this study applies schema theory to the setting of second dialect acquisition, an overview of schema theory seems to be in order. As we have provided such an overview elsewhere (Malcolm & Sharifian, in press), the

treatment here will be brief.

Schema Theory

The term 'schema' was introduced by Kant (1787/1963) to refer to general rules or procedures of imagination by which an image is procured for a concept – a further development of an idea dating back to Plato. In the 20th Century Bartlett (1932) introduced the term to psychology, attributing his use of it to Head (1920). It became a major theoretical construct within cognitive research (e.g. Bobrow and Norman 1975; Norman and Rumelhart 1975; Shank and Abelson 1975) and has been influential in other disciplines including cognitive linguistics (e.g., Langacker, 1987).

Schemas are units into which knowledge is packaged, building blocks of cognition (Rumelhart 1980). Piaget (1970) believed them to be universally part of human cognitive development. They may also operate at the individual, or 'idiosyncratic' level (Sharifian 2000), or be cultural (D'Andrade 1995; Sharifian 2000; Shore 1996; Strauss and Quinn 1997) or societal (Sharifian 2000). Cultural schemas are conceptual structures serving individuals for the storage of perceptual and conceptual information about their culture, thus enabling the interpretation of cultural experiences and expressions. Societal schemas are emergent phenomena passed on from one generation to another which set out the motivation for group-level "appropriate" thought and action. Schemas have also been shown by Langacker (1987) to provide templates or patterns for perceptions associated with linguistic forms.

Cultural schemas help to account for the culturally-oriented mental models which underlie action and have been useful in cross-cultural sense-making. For example, Fiske and Taylor (1991, p.119) refer to the following American Indian folk tale:

> The story's hero is shot by an arrow in battle, but feels nothing. His allies turn out to be ghosts. He returns home and tells the story. A black thing comes out

of his mouth, and he dies at sunrise the next day.

To make sense of this situation, the reader needs to be guided by the relevant cultural schema, according to which the hero was in the company of ghosts, was beyond feeling normal pain, and had his soul depart through his mouth.

It is possible to study cultural schemas by means of various research designs. Rice (1980) used an experimental design in which she sought to assess the role of cultural schemas in processing written stories by testing subjects for recall of stories which followed known (American) cultural schemas as opposed to stories which had been modified to reflect other (Inuit) cultural schemas. Hutchins (1980), following a naturalistic approach, recorded a formal dispute between two men in the Troubriand Islands and analysed it to reveal the assumptions on which the men's reasoning was based. Quinn in a series of studies (1982, 1987, 1992, 1996, 1997) analyzed interviews about marriage which she had collected from North American couples and then inferred the cultural model which underlay the way in which they related the relevant concepts.

According to D'Andrade (1991, p.294), the most direct indication of schematic organization in naturalistic discourse is found in repeated associative linkages. He has observed that people circle through the same network of ideas in their long stretches of talk, being generated by a friend, spouse, workmate, informant or patient (p. 287).

Returning to the issue of second dialect acquisition, equipped with the terminology of schema theory, it may be argued that acquiring a second dialect may involve different degrees of cognitive demand ranging from merely learning a few language schemas to learning a whole new set of language schemas as well as cultural schemas. The following section is an investigation of the acquisition of Standard Australian English as a second dialect by child speakers of Aboriginal English in Western Australia. We will particularly

focus on the description of how Aboriginal children, equipped with Aboriginal cultural schemas, come to deal with the new schemas they are expected to learn.

Australian Aboriginal children learning Standard Australian English

Speakers of Aboriginal English are required by the Australian language policy to master standard Australian English. The rationale behind this policy is to enable them to function "effectively" in the Australian society and to gain access to educational and social opportunities (Lo Bianco, 1987). Whether this is desirable or not and whether or not acquiring the standard dialect would lead to access to opportunities are separate issues which fall beyond the scope of the present discussion. The main focus of this paper is on the exploration of the way Aboriginal children approach the task of acquiring the standard dialect, in the light of schema theory, and also to draw implications for an effective bidialectal program for educating Aboriginal children. .

Malcolm (1992) reports that the majority of teachers he interviewed perceived the difference between the two dialects as being related to accent. This pattern supports the view that for many standard English speakers, dialect is equatable with accent. Many standard speakers view Aboriginal English as simply substandard English. This is however a distorted picture of reality. Linguistic research has shown that AE is a legitimate rule-governed dialect of Australian English (e.g., Harkins, 1994). The following section presents a brief description of each of these two dialects.

Standard Australian English

Kaldor (1991) defines Standard Australian English as:

> a regional standard dialect of English recognized by Australians with a certain

> (though not accurately specifiable) level of education obtained in Australia as being a suitable vehicle for expressing themselves *in official, formal as well as informal situations in speech and in writing* [emphasis original]. (p. 69)

Although Kaldor considers SAusE to be a regional dialect, the rest of her definition appears to imply that it is rather a social dialect than a regional dialect. Standard varieties may in fact originate as regional or social dialects. Standard British English (SBE) was originally a regional dialect, whereas Standard American English (SAE) was a social dialect, the dialect spoken by educated Americans (Knowles, 1987).

Kaldor (1991) maintains that there are features common to SAusE, SAE, and SBE. Kaldor employs the term *General Standard English* (GSE) to refer to the common core of these various standard Englishes. She observes that SAusE shares features with GSE and also with *Australian English* (AusE), which she uses to refer to standard and non-standard Australian varieties of English collectively. There are also features which are distinctive to SAusE. These are mostly in the areas of phonology, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions. The Australian National Dictionary is devoted to lexical features which are particularly Australian. Kaldor refers to words such as *backyard, station, barrack, thong, bush,* and *outback* as having distinctive Australian meanings.

While there are certain features that make SAusE distinguishable from SAE and SBE, there are not really features exclusive to SAusE as opposed to non-standard varieties of English in Australia. If anything, some of the non-standard varieties, such as Aboriginal English, can be identified by their distinctive features. In fact in making a distinction between AE and SAusE, it is usually AE that is delineated rather than SAusE. The following section looks at how this delineation is carried out.

Aboriginal English

AE refers to distinctive varieties of English widely spoken by Australian Aboriginal people. These varieties are considered collectively as a *minority dialect*, which is used as a marker of identity by its speakers. AE includes features from Aboriginal languages, the majority of which are extinct now, as well as from English. It includes features that belong neither to Aboriginal languages nor to English (Malcolm, 2000). AE is a rich linguistic system that reflects cultural meanings associated with Aboriginality. The lexical system in AE, for example, is made up of the following categories of words:

a) Aboriginal words with Aboriginal meanings (e.g., moritj)

b) Aboriginal words with new meanings (e.g., monach originally meaning 'black cockatoo' is used for 'policeman').

c) Aboriginal words suffixed with English morphemes (e.g., yorgas, composed of yorga [woman]+ s).

d) English words with English meanings (e.g., say)

e) Modified English words with English meanings (e.g., unna [isn't it?])

f) English words with Aboriginal meanings (e.g., deadly [great or enjoyable])

g) English words with additional meanings (e.g. 'learn' meaning learn as well as teach).

Aboriginal words in AE may be from different Aboriginal languages and are in fact employed to reflect regional affiliation. This is a source of variation between different varieties of AE. The AE lexical system represents a distinctive semantic system that has evolved from Aboriginal cultural experience and thought (Harkins, 1994). It is our contention that a systematic study of such rich semantic systems would not only enhance our understanding of the nature of the language or the variety in question but also unravel

mysteries about the general nature of the interaction between human cognition, culture, and language.

Aboriginal cultural schemas

As part of research pursued to support the provision of two-way bidialectal education for students who speak Aboriginal English, a number of notions from cultural linguistics (Palmer, 1996) and cognitive linguistics (e.g., Langacker, 1990) have been employed to explore the underlying semantics of Aboriginal English (Malcolm, et al, 1999). In particular the concept of *schema* proved to be instrumental in achieving this objective.

An analysis of discourse produced by Yamatji speakers of Aboriginal English living in Geradlton, 400 Km north of Perth, revealed a number of distinctive Aboriginal cultural schemas (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2000). The task of identifying schemas here was carried out by detecting recurrent discourse patterns representing similar semantic content across discourse produced by a number of AE speakers. Certain discourse markers and discourse strategies also appeared to be associated with these schemas.

These schemas included : Travel, Hunting, Observing, Scary Things, Gathering, Problem Solving, Social Relationships, Family and Smash (an Aboriginal English word for a fight). The first four were found to be among the most frequently occurring in the data (Malcolm & Rochecouste, 2000). These four schemas are described as follows:

a) Travel Schema:

> Experience of known participants organized in terms of alternating travelling (or moving) and non-travelling (or stopping) segments, usually referenced to a known time of departure and optionally including a return to the starting point.

b) Hunting Schema:

Experience of known participants organized with respect to the observation, pursuit and capture of prey, usually entailing killing and sometimes eating it. Success is usually associated with persistence.

c) Observing Schema:

Experience – usually shared experience – recalled in terms of details observed in it, whether of natural or social phenomena. The recall may function to provide a check on – or give evidence of – learning.

d) Scary things schema:

Experience (either first-hand or vicarious) of strange powers or persons affecting normal life within the community.

A similar analysis has recently been carried out with a corpus of texts from city-dwelling speakers of Aboriginal English (Malcolm, 2001). The results suggest that the texts analyzed appear to be mainly fed by 7 schemas: Scary Things, Hunting, Family, Travel, School, Social Relationships and Observing. The following table presents, in a comparative fashion, the schemas identified in the Yamatji Land and the Perth data.

Place table 1 around here

There are some patterns that stand out from the data presented in the above table. First of all, in terms of schema *types*, there are schemas common to both the Yamatji and the Perth data and there are also schemas that are exclusive to each corpus. There is also variation in frequency of occurrence between the schemas that inform the two sets of narratives.

With regard to the extent to which these schemas reflect Aboriginal culture or the Western culture, embedded in the school curriculum, they may be divided into four categories. These categories, which are metaphorically presented in the title of the present paper, reflect the schematic strategies recruited by Aboriginal children in the process of acquiring the standard dialect. The following section presents a discussion of these strategies.

Something Old

The above description of the schemas in child speakers of AE suggests that these children draw to a large extent on their cultural schemas, which reflect Aboriginal cultural activities, beliefs and practices. These schemas include Travel, Hunting, Gathering, Observing, and Scary Things (see Appendix for texts representing these schemas). Although these schemas are common to both the Yamatji and the Perth data, there is a difference in patterns of dominance of these schemas in the two sets of narratives. Scary Things, Observing, and Hunting are the most prominent in the Yamatji data, whereas the most prominent schemas in the Perth data are Scary Things, Hunting, and Family. This means that Observing, which is clearly an Aboriginal schema reflecting Aboriginal cultural skills and practices (Sharifian, in press), may be a less prominent schema in child speakers of AE in Perth. The data also reveal that the Travel schema is more prominent in the Perth narratives, although it is more frequent than appears in the figures for Yamatji texts, since it is often a sub-schema when the predominant schema is Hunting.

Something New

Some of the oral narratives recorded in Perth show approaches to experience which are shared by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community. With reference to the Aboriginal English speech community we could describe these as "new", in that they do not draw on the distinctive understandings which come from Aboriginal sources. Among the schemas which fall into this category are: School, Sport, Cowboys and Indians, Birthday Party and Trial and Error. In the example below, the speaker, a 12-year-old Aboriginal girl, is describing some of the things she did at school. In doing so she is drawing on a School schema, in which there are subjects, like *maths*, *spelling* and *art*. When she says *we done a painting*, the participants are understood to be her classmates and herself. When she says *we didn't get to make the card an I made one at home*, she is clearly talking from the perspective of the school. School is never mentioned. The schema is assumed. However "home" needs to be made explicit because that is not the schema within which she is working. Also, working within the School schema, Margarite takes a third person perspective in talking about " Aboriginals". From the point of view of her School schema, Aboriginals are "other".

P63 Father's Day

1 G: Hi my name is Margarite
2 an' my favourite thing in life is maths
3 and spelling
4 and 'specially art
5 an' well we done a painting of Aboriginals
6 and at- on Father's Day-
7 for this Father's Day

8 we done a basket goin' up

9 an' den for Mother's Day

10 we was goin' to make a card

11 an' do something

12 but we didn't get to make the card

13 an' I made one at home.

14 An' that's all, goodbye.

(178 Warr lines 132-138)

Something Borrowed

A schema which is relatively infrequent in occurrence among both populations (only occurring as a sub-schema in the Perth data) is Problem-Solution. Problem solving, reflected in Problem-Solution schema, is a concept which runs through and is highly emphasized by the Western schooling system. It is basic to the pattern of discourse which Hoey (1982) has demonstrated to be fundamental to the organization of many texts, both creative and technical, in standard English. According to the Problem-Solution schema, what is focused on is viewed in terms of linear stages of Situation-Problem-Solution-(Evaluation). The kind of linear movement and focus upon intervention into processes are not typical of texts coming from Aboriginal sources (Sharifian, in press), but, as the example below, they can be borrowed into Aboriginal English discourse:

Y28 Station Yarn

1 Gavin: Well..

2 this.. there was a uh man

3 and xxx

4 and um.. he was.. he was going along on e's horse.. way out the back..

5 and e's dog..

6 and um.. then..

7 well

8 e's horse.. bucked

9 an 'e hit 'is tree

10 an he hit this tree..

11 threw im..

12 an he broke he's leg an e's arm..

13 an e he .. and e's.. and my dad's.. my mum's grandfather.. well.. told my mum's mum..
that

14 then my mum's mum told.. told me..

15 and.. and.. and that old.. my mum's grandfather..

16 when e'd xx

17 an e's horse came back..

18 an.. so.. see e hopped on this.. other horse..

19 no no e got e got on this um.. xx jeep

20 an to.. went out

21 and e.. took some blanket....

22 Found im.

It is clear that this speaker is not only influenced by the Problem-Solution schema, but also by the Family schema in some to the detail he incorporates into his account (lines 13-15).

Something Blue

We reserve "something blue" for the situations where AE speakers adopt a schema that they cannot handle effectively, most likely because it combines cultural elements which they are not able to synthesize in a way which makes an account which is satisfying on either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal criteria. In such cases the schema is probably an imperfectly perceived non-Aboriginal schema which is partially reinterpreted from the Aboriginal point of view but the essence of neither Aboriginal nor Western cultural meaning is conveyed. The following texts exemplify this phenomenon:

Y4 Captain Cook story

(IM: Can anyone tell me any stories about things that happened to

Yamatji people?)

1 D: Well

2 when the when them Abor- Aborigines were in the bush..

3 well..

4 some settlers like Captain Cook an all them... came.. came in..

5 dus at.. well Captain Cook e came..

6 um e e discovered the Gascoyne River..

7 and e.. and when he died.. a- a Aborigine speared im..

8 mm speared im.

In the above text, the speaker clearly starts off the narrative while adopting a non-Aboriginal perspective in talking about Aborigines. However, the narrative does not represent a coherent account of the Aboriginal Captain Cook figure nor of the Western figure. The

speaker maps "Captain Cook" onto his local setting (Gascoyne River) although the events and experience attributed to Cook have come from other sources.

P65 Twin Witches (line 221-243)

L: Now tell me-
what about-
did Mum and Dad tell you about any ghost stories?
H: yes
L: You gonna tell me one? (13.5)
Gone
you tell me.
H: a witch was uh a witch turned into a a um a a ghost
and da uda witch turned into a ghost
an' they both turned into a a a monster
L: really.
H: an' they both twins
L: mm-m twins m-mm
an' what'd they do?
did they- what did they do?
did they-
were they scarin' all the kids
or they takin' the kids or what?
H: scarin' 'em an' takin' some.
L: takin' some and scarin'-
oh

22 H: Yeah dey're dey takin' them to their mum

23 'cause dem kids dat day take are lost

24 L: oh are they?

25 they're lost

26 H: an' dog dey take

27 L: an' dogs too?

28 oh

29 H: not to eat 'em

30 L: not to eat 'em

31 oh they're good witches

32 H: dey take 'em back

33 L: they're good ghosts, are they?

34 o-oh ok

The above text also appears to be an attempt on the part of an Aboriginal child speaker to bring together elements of Western ghost stories and the Aboriginal stories of the stolen children (i.e., children who, in the 20th Century, were separated from their parents and communities in accordance with the policy of the State). In Lines 19, 22, and 23, for example, the speaker juxtaposes "scarin'" and "takin'", which represent non-Aboriginal ghost stories and Aboriginal stolen generation stories respectively. This passage reflects a certain degree of struggle on the part of the speaker to work out her way by drawing on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal schemas and this appears to lead to a state of hanging in-between and communicative malfunctioning towards the end where the ghosts turn out to be "good witches". The utterance "o-oh ok" is also a witnesses to an absence of a clear schematic anchor point for the speaker to continue.

The following generalizations appear to surface from the above analysis of the Yamatji Land and the Perth schemas, in relation to the acquisition of Standard Australian English:

1. Child speakers of AE bring some of their cultural schemas to the task of acquiring SAusE.
2. These speakers appear to adopt certain schemas which underlie the presentation of school content, to express varieties of topics related to school and also to their culture.
3. Occasionally, AE speakers are observed to draw, in their expression, on schemas which are totally new to their schematic repertoire.
4. There are instances where an AE speaker's attempt to adopt a non-Aboriginal schema appears to result in discourse which is not in consonance with either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal schemas.

We have so far drawn on the description and comparison of the repertoire of schemas abstracted from the discourse produced by child AE speakers to explore the ways in which they come to deal with the task of acquiring schemas underlying the use of SAusE.

Implications for bidialectal education

We have attempted to show here that the use of Aboriginal English involves the management of a range of schemas that do not correspond with those used by speakers of Standard Australian English. We have also suggested that, since Aboriginal students are in a bicultural milieu, they have some access to the schemas on which Standard Australian English discourse depends, but they do not always show the ability to use them effectively or to distinguish them from the schemas coming from their own culture.

It would appear to us that part of the cognitive demand of learning a second dialect consists in learning to approach experience differently, that is, learning new schemas for the organization and interpretation of experience and discourse. We would argue that, for this to occur, speakers of Aboriginal English (and probably speakers of other non-standard dialects in parallel situations) need to have an education which is informed equally by knowledge of the culture of the learners and by knowledge of the broader culture from which the education system derives. Such an education should be bidialectal in that it should provide room for students to employ their cultural schemas as appropriate while providing clear paths between the "old" schemas towards the "new".

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Table 1: Predominant Schemas in Yamatji and Perth Oral Narratives

SCHEMA	YAMATJI (108 TEXTS)	PERTH (100 TEXTS)	TOTAL
1. Scary Things	35	19	54
2. Hunting	15	16	31
3. Observing	19	6	25
4. Family	3	13	16
4. Travel	4	12	16
6. Social Relationships	4	9	13
7. School		10	10
8. Gathering	4	1	5
8. Group Solidarity	5		5
8. Sport	1	4	5
8. Imprudent Behaviour	5		5
12. Problem Solution	3		3
12. Smash (i.e. fight)	1	2	3
12. Horror	1	2	3
12. Entertainment	3		3
16. Trial and Error	1	1	2
16. Contact History	2		2
18. Rationalizing		1	1
18. Pre-figuring		1	1
18. Ghosts		1	1
18. Birthday Party		1	1
18. Space		1	1
18. Joke	1		1
18. Fairy Story (parody)	1		1
25. Magic		(sub-schema only)	
25. Cowboys & Indians		(sub-schema only)	

Appendix

Texts associated with Aboriginal schemas

All the names in the following texts are pseudonyms

Y15 Yesterday and Today
Major schema: Travelling
Associated schema: Hunting

1. Yesterday
2. we we.. I was- uh me an Rick..
3. he tryna run a race from
4. an e's over dere..
5. and I walked along
6. an I .. an I went down trampoline
7. and ad a bounce
8. and I came back up here..
9. an den I.. walked around for a while..
10. and today..
11. we been um.. lashing um.. dragonflies
12. and.. Danny killed some
13. an I.. an I killed one...
14. an [nickname1] kill some
15. and ah.. an I went back to the trampoline
16. and ad a bounce..
17. we was playing something..
18. and.. we went ad dinner..
19. and after dinner I went back on the trampoline..
20. and ah.. after that we came back here..
21. and um... then.. thas de end of my story..
22. bye bye.

Y6 Hunting Story: Gavin Roberts
Major schema: Hunting

1 Gavin: Like
2 once we went shootin'... in the um.. daytime...
3 looong way out in the bush dere..
4 in the Toyota..
5 um.. den we seen dis... emu..
6 and we ad a big dog..
7 (Uncle Fred had??) a big dog
8 and e just- an e was sittin up on top of the thing
9 and e just jumped off
10 and- and e jumped straight onto the emu's neck..
11 but e.. bit im..
12 killed im.

Y26 Hunting and Gathering
Major schema: Gathering
Associated schema: Hunting

1 H: well um...
2 when we was.. um...out.. um.. forgot now...
3 when we was lookin at um old place
4 he went out there for bimba
5 this was in.. um not last year year before last year..
6 they was drip-
7 they was drippin there..
8 an I had a cup..
9 an I was I put the cup un(der) dere
10 when.. we went these big berries down..
11 I knew all the berries these are the um wild b-
(...)
12 ballongs?? Yeah they sweet
13 An all around the bush they knew where they all are..
14 An I knew where all they are
15 And no- the-- .. I know I know where the most..
16 An Mary Carbon an that they do- u- e wonder where all they are now..
17 An I went up there all the time
18 Most of the time..
19 Then Noreen?? an the other .. her friend we went up there
20 We looked for mushrooms an all..
21 And.. we ad the (laugh) ..
22 There was this bobtail was under this.. berry bush
23 xx dat e was under dere
(...)
24 Lyndon went to put his hand to get some berries (laugh)..
25 He seen the bobtail run up his hand
26 And he's runn(in?) away..
27 And we sh- we 'it..
28 An the.. wel when me an my brother well Davie' wen up there-
29 Dis was even before we was workin out Bruce Thomson's farm-
30 Well we out the back there wiz our gings.. our shanghais..
31 An we lift up-
32 We lifted up this big um.. couch old couch
33 Das where Joe - all the people.. Joe Rich e still live on.. de street up dere Main Street..
34 Dere e lifted up the thing..
35 Bobtail was dere and a black snake
36 And (what we done??)
37 I hit the bobtail in the head.. once
38 And it .. kept.. kept on runnin..
39 We hit it in the head tw-
40 I cut it in the head an cut it
41 Split its head open wiz a sharp rock.
42 An dat snake.. we we we 'it 'im..
43 I hit it on I hit it on the tail part..

44 An it spun around lie dat
45 And- jumped..
46 And Darren?? Hit it in on the - den.. in the back
47 Den.. I hit it in de- about ere somewhere.. about.. about on top o' de's
48 And.. it keep rollin ont'e's back
49 And.. like I hit it..
50 Hit it twice
51 And I had it..
52 None nothing then..

Y10 Observation Report: Trevor Bonner
Major schema: Observing

1 Trevor: Out Worra station there was big mobs of crows on the tree
2 Melanie: Yeah and um
3 Trevor: And there was big mob of crows on tree with the cockies
4 And and a big and a big um eagle came along
5 Melanie: Yungagee.
6 Trevor: And there was a yungagee
7 They's after the yungagee the big eagle
8 And and that's what um I 'ad for dinner
9 IM: Mm.
10 Trevor: That's the end.

Y3 Devil's visit
Major schema: Scary Things

Gavin: One devil came to me
IM: A devil came to you?
Gavin: Yeah.. (at Onslow
IM: (well tell me all about it Gavin
Gavin: Out the window.
IM: Out the window...(What do you mean?
Gavin: (Yeah... I was 'wake for a looong time..
Dat's out xxxx (an I was
IM: (Yes.. you were in the house were you?
Raymond: (xxxxxx dere?
Gavin: (Yeah.. an I looked..
An I was..
Wiped the window..
Then I seen sumpin come aroun the corner dere...
An I jumped
An I put de pillow over my head
IM: And what did it look like?
Gavin: Huh?
IM: (What did it look like.. what you saw?
Gavin: (I don't know..
Den in the morning I went around dere to have a look where his foot-mark

But it wasn't dere.
Raymond: Footmark wasn't dere?
Gavin: Nuh.
Raymond: I' was sandy?
Gavin: Yeah.. big sandy pile..
Den I got some sand an put it dere
An I.. den we.. den it came night again..
Den he- den I waited for a long time to see if he'd come again..
But he never come.

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